

Proclamation 6473 of September 16, 1992

Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1992

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On September 17, 1787, after 4 months of rigorous debate, study, compromise, and decision, delegates to the Federal Convention in Philadelphia signed our Constitution and submitted it to the States for ratification. Their hopes and prayers for a successful Convention had been answered. Today, more than 200 years later, we Americans continue to enjoy the blessings of liberty and self-government guaranteed by our Constitution.

When our Nation's Founders convened during the long, hot summer of 1787, leaving behind their farms and other personal interests in order to preserve our fragile Confederation of States, America looked very different from today. The United States has grown from a population of about 3,500,000 people who lived primarily along the Atlantic coast to a population of some 250,000,000 that now extends from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, as well as to Alaska and Hawaii. In 1787 the primary means of transportation was the horse. The Constitution itself was carried from Philadelphia to the Confederation Congress in New York by stagecoach, on a journey that took Major William Jackson 2 days. Today, by contrast, one can travel the same distance within hours.

Despite such dramatic changes, our Constitution remains the guiding charter of American government. This great document is, therefore, both a tribute to the wisdom and foresight of its Framers and a symbol of our abiding commitment to liberty under law.

The Framers of our Constitution were well aware of the lasting significance of their actions, and James Madison expressed a commonly held sense of destiny when he suggested that the outcome of the Federal Convention would "decide forever the fate of republican government." Our Constitution thus codifies in law the timeless truths that were first set forth in our Declaration of Independence: "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Generations of Americans have cherished our Constitution, and hundreds of thousands have given their lives to defend the principles it enshrines. We must continue to promote knowledge of, and reverence for, our Constitution if we are to preserve this great experiment in self-government and achieve further progress for America in the generations to come. As President Calvin Coolidge said: "If we wish to build new structures, we must have a definite knowledge of the old foundations. . . . We must frequently take our bearings from the fixed stars of our political firmament if we expect to hold a true course."

To become naturalized citizens, immigrants to the United States must pass an examination on the guiding tenets and basic institutions of American government, including those set forth in our Constitution. Yet the responsibilities of citizenship belong to each of us, native-born and naturalized Americans alike. We fulfill those duties when we

study our Nation's history and strive to maintain the great moral and spiritual heritage that inspired our Founders' vision for America. Indeed, good citizenship goes hand in hand with traditional values of faith and devotion to family, honesty and hard work, personal responsibility, and respect and concern for others. We also fulfill our obligations as a free people when we take advantage of our many opportunities to participate in the democratic process, including the consistent and prudent exercise of our right to vote.

In commemoration of the signing of our Constitution and in recognition of the importance of informed, responsible citizenship in our system of self-government, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 153), designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day." Also, by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 159), the Congress designated the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 1992, as Citizenship Day and call for the display of the flag of the United States on all government buildings on that day. I also proclaim the week of September 17 through September 23, 1992, as Constitution Week and urge all Americans to join in observing these occasions with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventeenth.

GEORGE BUSH

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National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 1992

By the President of the United States of America

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As we Americans celebrate the collapse of imperial communism and the expansion of democracy around the world, we are especially grateful to the courageous United States military personnel who defended the cause of freedom in war. Yet, while we welcome improved prospects for international cooperation and peace, we also remember our fellow Americans who continue to suffer the uncertainties of wartime: the families of American service members and civilians who are still listed as missing and for whom the fullest possible accounting has not yet been made.

As a sign of our Nation's commitment to obtaining the answers that these families seek, on September 18, 1992, the flag of the National League of POW/MIA Families will be flown over the White House, the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, the Selective Service System headquarters, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This black and white emblem will continue to symbolize America's clear, unequivocal resolve to keep faith with those who so faithfully served and defended us.